The Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina
The Rt. Rev. José Antonio McLoughlin, Bishop

April 16, 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When I first visited Western North Carolina on my honeymoon in 1993, I sensed immediately that this was holy ground. The mountains, the quiet beauty, the deep spirituality of this place — all of it spoke to my heart. My wife and I returned again and again over the years for rest and renewal, never imagining how deeply God would one day root our lives here.

Western North Carolina has become far more than a place of retreat. Beginning in 1997, through my involvement with the Towel Ministry and summers spent serving alongside Deacon Chris Greer, this diocese became woven into my call to ordained ministry. Those summers shaped me profoundly. They clarified my vocation and strengthened my sense that God was leading me toward priesthood. I completed my final Towel session just weeks before entering seminary carrying the imprint of this diocese on my heart.

It was with those deep roots, that abiding love, and a clear sense of God's call that I entered the discernment process to become your seventh bishop. That process only deepened my affection for this diocese and confirmed my conviction that God was inviting me to serve you in this role. To have been entrusted with this ministry among you has been one of the greatest honors of my life.

It is with both gratitude and a tender heart that I write to share that I have accepted a call to join the Presiding Bishop's staff as Chief Administrative Officer. In this new role, I will assist the Presiding Bishop as he seeks to reimagine and strengthen the ministries of The Episcopal Church, supporting dioceses, congregations, and Episcopalians across the wider church. After much prayer and discernment, I believe this is where God is now calling me to serve.

Over these past ten years, it has been an extraordinary privilege and joy to serve as your bishop. Together, we have walked through seasons of growth and challenge, celebration and uncertainty. We have strengthened congregations, fostered new ministries, navigated transitions, and remained steadfast in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ in our communities.

We have deepened our shared commitment to forming disciples, caring for one another, and embodying Christ's love in Western North Carolina.

While I cherish many aspects of episcopal ministry, nothing has meant more to me than being with you during parish visitations — worshiping alongside you, confirming and receiving new members, celebrating baptisms, preaching, listening, and simply sharing life together. Those moments in your churches have been the heart of my episcopacy. In those sacred gatherings, I have seen firsthand the faithfulness, resilience, generosity, and hope that define the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina. You have inspired me more than you know.

This decision has not come lightly. My love for this diocese runs deep. Yet I trust that the same Holy Spirit who brought us together is now guiding both you and me into new chapters of faithful ministry.

Earlier today, the Presiding Bishop and I met with the Standing Committee and Executive Council to discuss next steps.

Currently, I plan to hand over Ecclesiastical Authority to the Standing Committee on July 31. At that time, they will assume authority of the diocese, with Canon Augusta overseeing the day-to-day operations of the diocese and staff. It will be the work of the Standing Committee to also form a search committee and begin the prayerful and important work of discerning and calling your next bishop.

I am also working with the Presiding Bishop to secure episcopal support to continue parish visitations and fulfill other liturgical responsibilities after my departure. More detailed information about these arrangements will be shared in the coming weeks.

There is, of course, much more to say. In the months ahead, there will be opportunities to gather, to give thanks, to reflect on our shared ministry, and to say goodbye as well. I welcome your prayers as I continue to offer mine for you and our shared ministry.

Above all, I want to say thank you.

Thank you for trusting me.
Thank you for praying for me.
Thank you for challenging me, encouraging me, and walking beside me.
Thank you for your faithfulness to Christ and to one another.

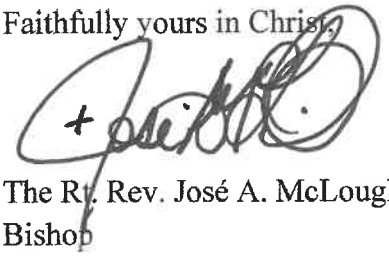
Whatever we have accomplished over these past ten years, we have accomplished together. Any good that has been done has been the work of God among us. I leave this role profoundly

grateful for the journey we have shared and confident that God's purposes for the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina are strong and sure.

Please know of my enduring love for you and my continued prayers for this beloved diocese.

The mountains that first drew my heart here will always remind me of you — of your steadfast faith, friendship and of the sacred ground we have shared.

Faithfully yours in Christ,



The Rt. Rev. José A. McLoughlin
Bishop